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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE  
7 October 1955

TO: Deputy Director (Intelligence)

SUBJECT: Swiss National Elections of 30 October 1955.

1. Offices to be filled: National Council (lower house): all 196 seats; Council of the States (upper house): some of the 44 seats, chosen directly by the cantons.

2. Parties Participating:

Agrarians:	Conservative, protect agricultural interests
Catholic Conservatives	Conservative, Roman Catholic, states righters
Communists	Labor (regular); Progressives (dissident)
Democrats	Middle-class, social democrats
Duttweiler Independents	Progressive, middle-class, represent consumer interests
Liberal Democrats	Conservative, Protestant, states righters
Radical Democrats	Progressive, middle-class, advocate private forms of ownership within strong central government
Social Democrats	Progressive, middle-class, partisans of wider state control

3. Outstanding Personalities in Swiss Politics:

Agrarians:

Rudolf Weber, president  
Karl Renold

Catholic/Conservatives:

Max Rohr, president  
Thomas Holenstein

Labor Communists:

Edgar Woog, secretary general  
Jean Vincent

State Dept. review completed

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Progressive Communists:

Leon Nicole, president  
Pierre Nicole

Democrats:

Albert Lardelli, president  
Philipp Schmid

Duttweiler Independents:

Walter Trueb, president  
Gottlieb Duttweiler, founder

Liberal Democrats:

Peter Zschokke, president  
Aymon de Senarclens

Radical Democrats:

Eugen Dietschi, president  
Paul Chaudet, defense minister

Social Democrats:

Walter Bringolf, president  
Felix Grutter

4. Present Party Strength

	<u>National Council</u>	
	1947 elections	1951 elections
Radical Democrats	52	51
Social Democrats	48	49
Catholic Conservatives	44	48
Agrarians	21	23
Duttweiler Independents	9	10
Liberal Democrats	7	5
Democrats	5	4
Communists	7	5
Other	1	1
	<u>194</u>	<u>196*</u>

\*Two seats added to reflect increased population.

	<u>Council of the States</u>	
Catholic Conservatives	18	18
Radical Democrats	11	12
Social Democrats	5	4
Agrarians	4	3
Liberal Democrats	2	3
Duttweiler Independents	1	0
Democrats	2	2
Minor Parties	1	2
Communists	0	0
	<u>44</u>	<u>44</u>

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5. Principal Issues: The high cost of defense and high taxes will probably figure prominently in the campaign. Demands for greater social benefits and a 44-hour workweek will also be debated.

6. Principal Factors Affecting the Outcome: Current Swiss prosperity probably precludes any sharp change in voter preferences. The public is generally satisfied with the government's handling of foreign affairs, despite the furor over the increase in watch tariffs by the US.

Nevertheless, the high cost of maintaining the military establishment since the end of the war has met with mounting public resistance, particularly among French Swiss, which led to a political crisis last fall, forcing the resignation of the defense minister. The Social Democrats in particular are trying to capitalize on the issue in their campaign.

Both Social Democrats and Radical Democrats are proposing reductions in taxation, pointing to a surplus in the 1954 national budget. The Socialists are also recommending, in the perennial debate with the cantons over taxation powers, that the permanent taxation powers of the central government be enlarged. The Socialists are also campaigning for increased social benefits and, with the Independents, support a 44-hour workweek. Social issues are unlikely to be decisive, however, since Swiss labor is in a strong position.

The question of removing constitutional proscriptions against certain Roman Catholic Church activities, currently demanded by the Catholic Conservatives, may become an issue although it is not to be voted on directly.

The Communist Party is probably at its rock-bottom strength, having split since the last national election. It is unlikely that its two parties together can win the five seats the Communists obtained in 1951 in the lower house. Moreover, the antinational character of the Communists have been made even clearer in the interim.

7. Background: A 7-man "board of directors" known as the Federal Council exercises the executive functions in Switzerland and in effect governs the country. At the present time, the Radicals, Catholic Conservatives and Agrarians are represented in the council. The Social Democrats, who withdrew in 1953 after ten years' participation, will probably again attempt to make a campaign issue out of "parties too long in power."

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Many Swiss believe the elections on 30 October will reflect the results of the cantonal elections in Zurich held in April of this year, in which the Radical Democrats obtained small gains at the expense of the Farmer-Artisans-Bourgeois party, while the Social Democrats gained slightly at the expense of the Independents.

Since 1951, the Radical Democrats have made slight gains at the expense of the traditionally conservative Liberal Democrats and the Social Democrats have shown consistent though slight gains in a number of cantonal elections. The Independents, on the other hand, have been losing steadily. The Communists have shown losses but not to the extent expected.

8. Informed Opinion on the Outcome: The American embassy in Bern has indicated that the national elections will demonstrate the continued stability of political currents in the country and that there will be only minor changes in the relative standing of the existing parties.

9. Significance for US Security Interests: The Swiss national elections will have little bearing on US security interests, except insofar as they benefit the Western cause by demonstrating the effectiveness of democratic institutions.

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